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A BRIEF HISTORY

OF THE 1471
WOMAN'S
BOARD OF
MISSIONS
OF THE
CUMBERLAND
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH

1880-1924

BY
MRS. JOHNNIE MASSEY CLAY

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The Woman's Board of Missions of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church was organized at Evansville, Ind., in 1880. Up to that time the Assembly's Board of Missions was the only Board of the Church sending out foreign missionaries. Under that Board Rev. and Mrs. A. D. Hail were sent as missionaries to Japan. Struggling against inadequate funds—alas, how strange, there has always been inadequate funds for this great work—and learning through other missionaries on the field that the women of their denominations back home were organized to raise funds and pray for missions. Rev. Hail wrote to those at the head of our Assembly at that time and pled that our women be also organized in behalf of the great cause of missions so that our Church could do a larger missionary work.

The letters were received. Our leaders must have felt the just claim, and Divine, in that Macedonian call, for they sent out a call for Cumber-

land Women to assemble at Evansville, Ind., May 25, 1880, in conjunction with the Assembly's Board of Missions. About seventy-five women came, and the Woman's Board of Missions of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church was organized.

One can well imagine there was rejoicing in heaven that day, for the angels knew that the work that day put in motion would record the birth of thousands of souls into the kingdom of Christ as the years went by.

And one can well imagine, also, with what a feeling of awe, and with what trembling fear these early women thrust their shoulders under this sacred load they were so unaccustomed to carrying, and how, in their fear and inexperience, they must have called mightily on God to lead them every step of the way they must go.

And one can imagine how loyally those noble men, who were the human instruments in God's hands in bringing into being this young organization, stood back of them in prayer and co-operation, making the way as easy as possible for their untried feet as they went out over the Church, through its unopened paths, to introduce to uninformed, timid women the great need and worthwhileness of this work of which they knew so little.

The first officers were as follows:

Mrs. R. B. Ruston, President.

Mrs. W. F. Nisbet, Vice-President.

Mrs. W. J. Darby, Recording Secretary.

Mrs. D. S. Ragon, Corresponding Secretary.

Mrs. N. A. Lyon, Treasurer.

Mr. Alvah Johnson, Auditor.

This new Board, during the whole of the first year, held two all-day sessions each month for prayer and planning, but chiefly for prayer, "that the Lord would lay His hand on at least two young women who would answer the call to the foreign field."

It is with no feeling of surprise that we record that God answered those prayers—God always does when we lay hold of Him like that.

At the end of the year a Miss Orr and a Miss Leavitt offered themselves and were accepted for foreign service, and it was found that the new Board had gathered unto itself NINETY-NINE CONTRIBUTING AUXILIARIES, and an offering of \$2,013.68. How wonderfully, above all they asked or expected, had God answered their prayers!

The years passed. God laid His hand on these women and blessed them and the labors of their hands. Whatever else has happened we would not rob them of the glory of His leadership and blessing during the years of humble, prayerful service which followed, nor fail to record our gratitude. Many Auxiliaries were formed, and many Children's Bands. All over the Church they sprang up from nothing into splendid, fruit-bearing vines. A number of missionaries were sent to the field. Many souls were saved. Offerings gradually increased, until in 1906 the total annual receipts amounted to \$52,006.18. In the mean time our Mrs. Mattie Ashburn and Mrs. Mary M. Graf, of the present Woman's Board, had been made members of the then acting Board.

But in May, 1906, all our leaders, save the two mentioned above, went out from us into fields that seemed larger, and the Woman's Missionary Organization of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church stood shattered and broken, the result of certain experiences in our Church history too well known to need reviewing. We had no Woman's Board—no treasury, no Board books, no plans, no literature, and only one active missionary, Rev. Gam Sing Quah, and one missionary in training, Miss Sallie Herbert, left to us. There were but few organized or officered Synods or Presbyteries remaining, and no known membership. Indeed all seemed hopeless chaos. Reference is made to this, not to stir up old memories or arouse old feelings, but only as a starting point from which we arrive at the progress made since then.

In the fall of 1906 steps were taken toward the reorganization of the Woman's Board. In

December a temporary Board was appointed as follows, to serve till the meeting of the Woman's Convention in May following: Mrs. Mattie Ashburn, President, Mrs. Sarah L. Jordan, Vice-President; Mrs. Tillie M. Stone, Recording Secretary; Mrs. Mary M. Graf, Corresponding Secretary-Treasurer; Mrs. Anna M. Conn, Mrs. Frances Varner, Mrs. Lydia E. Tupman. On the following May at the Woman's Convention at Dickson, Tenn., these members, together with Mrs. Ella H. Goodnight and Mrs. Johnie Massey Clay, were made the permanent Board for that Convention Year.

Since that time there have been a number of changes in the personnel of the Board, occasioned by death or resignation. But four of the members elected in that first meeting at Dickson, Tennessee, are still serving in that capacity, these being, Mrs. Mattie Ashburn, Mrs. Mary M. Graf, Mrs. Tillie M. Stone, Mrs. Johnie Massey Clay.

The present membership of the Board is as follows:

Mrs. Mattie Ashburn, President Emeritus.

Mrs. Johnie Massey Clay, President.

Mrs. Frances C. Langley, First Vice-President.

Mrs. Gertrude Schulz, Second Vice-President.

Mrs. Tillie M. Stone, Recording Secretary.

Mrs. Mary M. Graf, Corresponding Secretary-Treasurer.

Mrs. Daisy Bray Freeman, Tithing Secretary.

Miss Mattie Huber, Secretary of Literature and Extension.

Miss Helen Bradford.

Today the work of the Woman's Board of Missions, now one of the active Boards of the Church, fully officered, with splendid offices that would be a credit to most any organization or denomination, established in Evansville, Ind., is functioning, more or less, in every Synod of the Church and most of the Presbyteries. Alabama, Illinois, Indianola, Kentucky, Missouri, Mississippi, Tennessee, West Tennessee, and Texas Synods are fully organized and officered, and active. In the other Synods, more or less of the

Presbyteries are organized and officered, serving as a nucleus around which to build.

When we came together in our Woman's Convention in Dickson, Tenn., in 1907, it was found the total sum contributed to our Woman's Work since the exodus was only \$569.00. Our books show a total offering amounting to \$55,500.43 contributed during Convention Year 1920-21, \$36,274.36 of it toward the building fund for our two new Missions. Our total offerings in 1922-23 amounted to \$29,734.98. Our Treasurer's annual statement made May 23, 1923, shows that since 1906 the Woman's Board has accumulated in cash, bills receivable and properties, a net cash worth of \$108,532.92, which does not include certain properties in China for which we have not the deeds in our possession, and which have been acquired largely by the Chinese themselves.

That first year at Dickson we were an organization without a specific work. At that Convention the Woman's Board was asked to share with the Assembly's Board of Missions in the expense of maintaining the San Francisco Chinese Mission. Even this was a large task for us with only \$569.00 in the treasury, and Convention expenses to be taken out of this. But we thankfully accepted the responsibility. The next year the Woman's Board assumed the full responsibility of that Mission, then a very small struggling institution.

Today the Woman's Missionary Work is sustaining the San Francisco Mission, now large, vigorous, inspiring, requiring the services of four workers and pleading for more; with a Chinese church membership of 110, and an enrollment of 98 in the Sunday School; also eight Missions in China as follows: Canton, Sha Kai, Honam, Ti Won, Shekki, Tong Gaw, Rickisha and Shek Won. Our reports show 1,824 baptized Church members brought to Christ through the instrumentality of these Missions in China, and an enrollment of 1,024 in the Sunday Schools. Oh, how we rejoice and thank God for this harvest of souls, and these hundreds under Christian influence in the Sunday Schools! The total number of workers

now sustained by the Woman's Board is 30. This includes missionaries and office force. Besides these there are seven self-supporting workers giving of time and self freely on our China field.

Aside from the maintenance of the work above mentioned, the Woman's Work of the Church has experienced another great privilege and service. During these years, a total of \$13,377.74 has been contributed to Home Mission Work and Church Extension. Though this sum is not large, every Synod in the Church has shared in its benefits, this sum having been contributed toward church buildings, pastors' salaries in weak churches, Presbyterial and Synodic field men, and other such purposes, which stood for the rebuilding and strengthening of our own beloved Church.

We have established an Educational Fund for the education of missionary candidates, which seeks to provide for splendid and trained equipment for service with a view to placing our Missions on a standard second to none. And from now on it is the purpose and plan of the work to require as nearly as possible, that every American worker shall be equipped by special training for his or her task.

We have launched a special effort and plan of teaching Missions in the Sunday School, the prayer and purpose of which is that we grow into a great Missionary Church by planting missions in the heart of the young.

Through this effort missions is now, more or less, systematically taught in 239 Sunday Schools, and last year brought in an offering of \$1,974.59 for missions, which would never have reached this great Cause save for this specific effort in the Sunday Schools, nor would these thousands of young people have had the joy of giving, nor the enlarged vision this effort has produced.

We have launched a Mother's Memorial Movement, in honor of and to the memory of Cumberland Presbyterian Mothers. This Movement produces a fund with which we educate our young ministers in China; also Chinese women for

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teachers and leaders in our China Missions, as a monument to our mothers.

But the greatest achievement is yet to be related. In 1919-20 our Woman's Board felt the pressure of the Lord's hand upon us, moving us to undertake in one year, a task we had felt inclined to believe it would take us years to do—the building of our two Missions, one in San Francisco, the other in Canton, China. Opportunities for a wonderful work awaited us in both these great cities, but we were so handicapped for lack of room and suitable buildings it was impossible for us to avail ourselves of them. It was a bold undertaking, but a great and glorious task. God warmed our hearts to it. He gave us courage to dare and do, and to sacrifice. And today, our new Mission building in San Francisco, a beautiful, substantial, three-story structure, (or two-story and a basement), built at a cost of about \$31,000, stands as a monument to our faith in God and to His leadership. Also, two beautiful buildings in China, one at Canton, the other at Honam, built at a cost, including certain lots, of \$22,500 gold. Words fail us when we would express our praise and thanksgiving to our Lord for His goodness to us!

And not only this: With money contributed by the Memphis, Tenn., church, to which the Chinese added considerable more, we now have a new Mission building at Shekki. Also another at Sha Kai, to which a Chinese merchant contributed \$1,000.00. The corner stone for this building was laid November 11, 1922. At Ti Won we have a splendid building with a seating capacity of 400, erected mostly by the Chinese themselves, at a cost of \$4,700.00, Mexican, and dedicated January, 1915. And at Tong Gaw, we have a good Mission building, formerly a heathen temple of worship, erected at an enormous cost, and purchased by our Chinese Christians a few years ago and dedicated as a Cumberland Presbyterian Mission.

And during the time these things have been added unto us through the goodness and the ever-present leadership of our Lord, we have at-

tained a growth in membership and Societies which, though not what it should be, is, nevertheless, a growth for which we rejoice, and would not fail to give thanks in this day when the hands and hearts and lives of women are drawn upon by such a multiplicity of calls. Our Organization now enrolls 492 Women's and Young Women's Societies, and 71 Children's Bands, with an active membership of 6,065 and 1,165 honorary members. And none but the Heavenly Father can ever know the burden of prayer, the agonizing effort, the anxiety, the persevering faith represented in this growth.

We tell of these achievements and these great blessings which God is heaping upon us, not in a spirit of pride and vain glory—far from it—but in a spirit of humble thanksgiving that our Lord has used our weak hands and short arms, and counted us worthy to be used as His instruments in bringing about such results for His Kingdom. And we tell it that you, dear reader, may know what we are doing, and that God seems to be stamping our efforts with His approval. And we tell it, also, that you may know that the Woman's Work of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church is rapidly growing out of its day of small things. Indeed we will soon be a large work, for, just in proportion as our facilities for taking care of our opportunities are increased by our new buildings and better equipments, just in like proportion will our work become larger and greater by reaching more people, touching more hearts, and lifting more souls Christward.

Indeed, it has always been a great work. It was great even while it was very small—great, because its purpose is great, and ennobling, and uplifting; great, because it represents a labor of love and unselfish Christian service—asking nothing, giving all; great, because God is in it and because it is an expression of His will toward all mankind, that the whole world shall have a knowledge of Christ and be saved.

And now, dear Cumberland Presbyterians, this little leaflet is placed in your hand, not alone to tell you what our Woman's Work has accom-

plished, and is, but to tell you that we need YOU and we need YOUR CONTINUED HELP. We stand at the door of your heart and cry to YOU. HELP, OH, HELP US TAKE CARE OF THIS GREAT AND GROWING WORK——this wonderful, far-reaching opportunity God has given the Cumberland Presbyterian Church of teaching the great principles of our faith, and of lifting hungry souls out of their heathen darkness into the ennobling presence of our Christ.

We call on you for YOUR HELP, not alone because the work is so worthy, and because it is really yours, also, since you are a Christian and a Cumberland Presbyterian, but because it is rapidly and surely outgrowing our present membership.

Our new and larger Mission in San Francisco has opened our doors to many new opportunities there. This calls for more workers and larger expenditures. We have opened a new Primary Department in this Mission, which necessitated another full-time worker, and even so, our missionaries there have their hands, as well as their hearts, full. We therefore anticipate the necessity of another worker added to the San Francisco force by the opening of our next school year.

We face the same situation in China. Better buildings and equipment mean enlarged opportunities and growth. We would not have it otherwise. It was for this we wanted our new buildings. But growth calls for more laborers. More laborers call for more salaries.

And there are other fields we should enter. Other phases of missionary work we should undertake, and all the enterprises of our work are calling for expansion, and our present membership, though they long to do so, cannot provide for all of this.

And the non-Christian world, dissatisfied, and torn from their old beliefs and former faith in their false religions as in no other time, are restlessly watching for some other faith—or religion—to take the place of that in which they have at last lost confidence. It is the pivotal hour. They were never so ready as now, never

so eager for Western knowledge, nor so ready to accept America's God. We tremble when we think that the Cumberland Presbyterian Church may not reach her share in time, or that some of those may come to her doors in vain.

We ask YOUR HELP—not only that you join our ranks as a contributing member. We need your offerings, but we need, even more, YOUR wisdom, YOUR prayers, YOUR presence, YOUR encouragement. We plead with you to become REALLY enlisted and in harness with those of your denomination who are humbly, and prayerfully, and, yes, imperfectly, but honestly, and lovingly bound together to lift up Christ as Lord and Saviour before the eyes of non-Christian lands as well as our own.

We ask that you join us in our plans, striving with us to carry them forward to success; that our plans become your plans; that you study them, and put them into execution; that you join us in our purpose to attain to certain standards and to reach certain aims; that you join us in our growing need and purpose to increase our membership and offerings; and above all, that you join us in our prayer that God will continue to hold us worthy to serve Him in this beautiful way, and continue to hold us by the hand and lead us.

Do this in the name of and for the sake of the Church you love.

Do this in the name of and for the sake of humanity of which you were once an unsaved part.

But, most of all, do this for the Christ Who was sacrificed for THESE, even as for YOU. "Go teach them", said Jesus, "all things whatsoever I have taught you, and lo, I go with you all the way." "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." "And I will that not one of THESE shall perish."

There will come a day when we shall meet Him face to face and He will say: "If ye did it even unto the least of THESE"—THESE whom our work is now seeking to uplift—"ye did it

unto me." "But if ye did it not unto THESE,
ye did it not unto me."

What shall the answer be?

Behold the door of opportunity is THIS DAY
opened unto you!

WOMAN'S BOARD OF MISSIONS
CUMBERLAND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
EVANSVILLE, INDIANA

PRICE 6 CENTS

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